

Here's an assignment similar to what I would have received in a high school History class:

*Compare and contrast the following, with special relevance to foreign policy in the United States.*

*- The reminder by former President Bush (in his last national address) that we haven't had a terrorist attack on U.S. soil in the seven years post-9/11 ... and ...*

*- President Obama signing-off on the official closure of Guantanamo Bay within the next year.*

Let's start with the first item. Simple question: how many attacks had we had on U.S. soil PRIOR to 9/11? The largest one in recent times was by a home-grown American in Oklahoma City ... but I think we'd be hard-pressed to find many entries on this list in the first place. So, let's all thank former President Bush for his attention to Homeland Security (otherwise known as civilians detained for indeterminate durations ... and wiretapping). We survived seven years ... much like we'd done before 9/11.

*[Note 1/24/09: specific statistics have been brought to my attention - see below. Please note the underlying "big picture" concept related to this]*

This was all part of what was termed the ["Bush Doctrine"](#) .

Countries typically need justification for acts of war. The latin term for this is "casus belli".

Iraq and the "war on terrorism" have both proven to be a rather nebulous casus belli, and they

have played a significant role in the Bush Doctrine. President Bush approved a "war" in Iraq using the justification of the now-legendary "weapons of mass destruction". This has never been a "war" as much as it has been a foreign occupation. Last I looked, Afghanistan would be similar. Oh, and did you know that the former President approved bombings in Pakistan - another country that is not ours? Oh, that's justified by the "war on terror". Would we declare war on Mexico? Canada? On the basis of this casus belli?

*Canada ... keeps inundating the NHL with hockey players. Argh ... that must be justification for something ... [insert sarcasm here ... better yet, watch the movie ["Canadian Bacon"](#) ]*

The Bush Doctrine essentially gave President Bush the free reign (and justification) to do what he wanted, where he wanted. A nebulous, stealthy enemy - in a variety of countries. And now, we wonder why our country is hated by many.

Second item: [Gitmo is closing](#) . Perhaps civil freedoms are returning.

For the past 7 years, we have detained people as "enemy combatants" without formal charges filed. You can wonder all you want about whether they are dangerous, had involvement with 9/11, etc - but if you can't file charges against them, how can we detain them indefinitely? Would we do this for anyone suspected of a crime on U.S. soil? "Beyond a reasonable doubt" also comes to mind. Of course, the justification for this is Homeland Security - and don't forget the wiretapping that has gone along with all of this. Yep, something about civil liberties and the abuse of power. Habeus corpus, anyone?

So Gitmo is closing, and now we can finally get on with restoring some degree of foreign policy. Which brings us back to the original question: compare and contrast these issues with relevance to foreign policy.

The Bush doctrine, the "foreign policy" of the last 8 years, is a legacy that will set the country back many many years. It will set us back internationally by many more. And President Obama has taken one small step towards an appropriate resolution to an ugly era in foreign policy.